



SANTA YNEZ VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DR. KIMBERLY SHEEHAN
SUPERINTENDENT

July 8, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
pkelly@sbcourts.org

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

JUL 08 2026

Angela Brown, Executive Officer
By *[Signature]*
Deputy Clr
M. MANSON

Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
sbcgj@sbcourts.org

Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Public Participation Without Barriers: Brown Act
Clarity at School Board Meetings

Dear Judge Kelly, Foreperson Mezzetta de Cossio, and Grand Jury Members:

The Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District (SYVUHSD) is committed to conducting its meetings in accordance with the Brown Act and in an open, transparent, and accessible manner. The Board recognizes the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for public participation and ensures that members of the public have access to board meetings, agendas, meeting materials, and opportunities to address the Board on matters within its jurisdiction.

The County Board of Education provides multiple opportunities for public participation beyond minimum legal requirements, including in-person and virtual attendance options, Spanish interpretation, and public access to board meeting recordings (in both English and Spanish) and board meeting materials through its website.

Finding 1

Some education governing boards' agendas and public comment instructions imply that members of the public must complete a speaker card, sign-up sheet, online form, or provide identifying information in order to speak at a public meeting.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 1: Agree

The Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District Board of Education agrees that public comment procedures can be construed to imply that members of the public who wish to address the Board must provide identifying information.

Recommendation 1

The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1 below, review agenda language and public comment instructions to plainly state that speaker cards, sign-up sheets, and online forms are optional tools used solely to help organize public comment, and to affirm that any person may address the board during public comment periods without providing a name, address, or other personal identifying information. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 1: Will be implemented

The SYVUHSD Board of Education's agenda language, public comment procedures, and related materials will be edited to clearly communicate that sign-up sheets and speaker slips are tools used to assist in organizing public comment and that individuals may address the Board without providing a name, address, or other identifying information.

Finding 2

Website structure, language access, and accessibility issues at some education governing boards hinder the public's ability to find agendas, minutes, and participation instructions, particularly for Spanish-speaking community members and individuals who rely on accessible document formats.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 2: Disagree partially with explanation

The SYVUHSD Board of Education agrees that public access and participation are important and that educational governing boards should make reasonable efforts to ensure meetings and meeting materials are accessible to the communities they serve.

The SYVUHSD Board of Education currently provides for multiple avenues of accessibility including but not limited to: in person participation with translation services available, live streaming of meetings in English with real-time Spanish translation on the SYVUHSD YouTube Channel (with a link directing individuals to the meeting stream on the district's board agenda page), and in-person simultaneous Spanish interpretation at all board meetings. The District also posts recordings of all meetings on the website.

Recommendation 2a

The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1 below, place a prominent, direct link to current agendas on its primary homepage, as required by Government Code section 54954.2. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 2a: Has been implemented

The SYVUHSD has added a more prominent button to the District's home page. However, the SYVUHSD maintains that it has always had a prominent link to current agendas on the home page under the Governance tab in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2.

Recommendation 2b

The Grand Jury recommends that governing boards serving districts with more than a 20% Spanish-speaking population provide Spanish language translations of their meetings, agendas and minutes on their websites. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 2b: Will not implement.

The SYVUHSD Board of Education supports the intent of this recommendation and agrees that language access is important to public participation. In fact, the SYVUHSD Board provides access beyond the Brown Act legal requirements to enhance accessibility.

The SYVUHSD Board of Education provides Spanish-language interpretation & translation if needed, during Board meetings and livestreams both English and Spanish on the SYVUHSD YouTube channel. The meeting agenda and minutes are not translated; however, all SYVUHSD parent/family-related materials and communications are translated into Spanish.

The District does not meet the Grand Jury's stated threshold of serving a district with more than a 20% Spanish-speaking population and neither the California Education Code nor the Brown Act requires school districts to translate governing board agendas, minutes, or meeting materials into Spanish or any other language. The District complies with the public notice requirements established by Government Code sections 54954.2 and 54957.5 by timely posting agendas and making agenda materials available for public inspection in the manner prescribed by law.

The District is a small basic aid school district with a district office administrative staff of only one employee. Preparation, publication, and maintenance of governing board agendas and minutes are performed by a single employee who is not proficient in Spanish. Implementing this recommendation would require the District to retain outside translation services or hire additional personnel solely to perform translation services. Neither the Brown Act nor the Education Code imposes such a requirement, and the District is not legally obligated to create additional staffing positions or incur ongoing operational expenses for activities not mandated by statute.

The District remains committed to providing meaningful access to its programs and services as required under applicable federal and state civil rights laws. However, because California law does not require translated governing board agendas, minutes, or meeting materials, and because implementation would impose a significant unfunded administrative burden on a small district, the District is unable to implement this advisory recommendation.

Finding 3

Some governing boards provide no way to participate remotely while public comment is officially open.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 3: Agree

The SYVUHSD agrees that some governing boards do not provide a way to participate remotely while public comment is officially open.

Recommendation 3a

The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1 below, provide video conferencing for remote participation, which can also be used as a broadcast archive. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 3a: Will not implement

The Ralph M. Brown Act requires that governing board meetings be open and public but does not require school districts to provide video conferencing, livestreaming, broadcast archives, or remote participation for regularly scheduled meetings.

Government Code sections 54953(a), 54954.2, and 54954.3 require that meetings be held openly, agendas be properly posted, and members of the public be afforded an opportunity to comment. The District fully complies with each of these statutory requirements.

The District is a small school district with limited administrative staffing and resources. Providing routine video conferencing would require additional technology infrastructure, software, technical support, records management, and staff time beyond the District's current operational capacity. Because these services are not required by California law, the District has determined that committing limited public resources to implement this recommendation is neither fiscally prudent nor operationally feasible. The District is however committed to continuing to record all meetings, continuing to live stream all meetings, and continuing to maintain a broadcast archive.

Recommendation 3b

The Grand Jury recommends that, where remote participation is offered, agendas clearly explain how the public may observe and provide comment remotely at any time public comment is open. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 3: Will not implement

This recommendation is not applicable to SYVUHSD because the District does not provide routine remote participation for governing board meetings.

Government Code section 54954.2 specifies the required contents of governing board agendas. Because California law does not require school districts to offer remote participation during regularly scheduled meetings, the District has no remote participation procedures to include in its agendas.

Should the District elect to utilize a meeting format in the future for which remote participation is authorized and governed by applicable provisions of the Brown Act, the District will comply with all notice and agenda requirements then in effect. Until such time, the District will continue to satisfy all statutory agenda requirements through compliance with Government Code section 54954.2.

Finding 4

Some governing boards do not consistently post meeting minutes in a clear and easy-to-find location, which makes it harder for the public to track board actions over time.

SYVUHSD Response to Finding 4: Disagree partially with explanation

The SYVUHSD posts all agendas, minutes, and recording files in the same place. There is now a prominent button on the home page that directs individuals to this location on the website.

Recommendation 4

The Grand Jury recommends each governing board adopt a written practice for promptly posting approved minutes on its website. As a best practice, approved minutes should be posted within five business days after approval, with past minutes kept in an accessible online archive. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

SYVUHSD Response to Recommendation 4: Requires further analysis

The District supports the objective of making approved governing board minutes available to the public in a timely manner and currently maintains approved board minutes in an accessible online archive. However, the feasibility of adopting a formal policy requiring approved minutes to be posted within five business days after Board approval requires further analysis.

The District is a small basic aid school district, responsibility for preparing governing board agendas, minutes, posting materials, and maintaining the Board's online records rests primarily with a single employee whose duties also include numerous other time-sensitive and legally mandated responsibilities throughout the year.

Neither the California Education Code nor the Ralph M. Brown Act establishes a statutory deadline requiring approved governing board minutes to be posted online within five business days after approval. Accordingly, the District must evaluate whether this recommended timeline is operationally feasible and sustainable given existing staffing levels, competing legal obligations, and available resources before committing to a formal written practice.

The District will continue to post approved governing board minutes in accordance with applicable law while evaluating whether the recommended timeline can be consistently achieved without adversely affecting higher-priority operational and statutory responsibilities.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Kimberly Sheehan
Superintendent